

Homebrew and Fan Stories 1

❖ Homebrew

New Cult: The Pantheon

The Pantheon began shortly after the Zone appeared -- the exact date is unknown, as for obvious reasons one does not take out a press release announcing one has formed a conspiracy to take over the world. But it is known that one of the first Zoners developed, as his insanity, a quite literal god complex. Specifically, he believed he was the god Loki of the extinct Norse Pantheon, and that he had been reborn to restore the worship of himself and other pagan deities.

This would have been just one more crazy Zoner, except for the fact the Zone had gifted Loki, in game terms, with Clairvoyance 5 and Mindworm 5. He used the first to locate another Zoner, an electrokinetic, and used the second to brainwash that Zoner into believing that he was Zeus, god of the sky and lightning. Loki thought he was simply awakening Zeus's true nature, due to his delusion. The two of them then tracked down another Zoner, and brainwashed her into thinking she was Isis. And another, and another ...

Each member of the Pantheon believes that he or she is the reborn version of some god or goddess from an extinct multitheistic religion. Virtually all of them are represented by now. Loki is no longer the only one with Mindworm, which increases the Pantheon's ability to "recruit". What has been gathered from deprogrammed Pantheon members is a terrifying conspiracy to take over the world. Zoners will be the rulers, nearly literal gods, and ordinary parapsychics will be their subordinates. Ordinary humans will simply be slaves.

The Pantheon's numbers are not sufficient as yet to overwhelm the NEG, much less the NEG's enemies, but they are getting there. They already possess significant influence, wealth and weaponry. They need to be stopped. Can the PCs do the job?

New Cult: The Yarany Hrana

When the Mi-Go created the Nazzadi, one of the major debates among them aliens was whether or not to include crime in their culture. On the one hand, crime would weaken the Nazzadi war machine, as speculation and corruption damaged their logistics and weakened their resolve. On the other hand, without experience with crime the Nazzadi would be more vulnerable to criminal methods used by humanity during the upcoming war.

In the end, a compromise was reached. Crime was included in the Nazzadi culture, along with a dedicated criminal investigation team, but the black market was under the control of the Yarany Hrana, a criminal group modeled on the New York Mafia and Japanese Yakuza, and named after a variety of poisonous plant on the Nazzadi homeworld (in reality, the plant was as fictional as the homeworld itself). The criminal group itself was commanded by Zendo Nari, a shrewd and competent Firstborn who knew of the Nazzadi's true nature. She was tough as nails and sharp as a tack, and proved herself more than capable of controlling the dark and violent souls who gravitated into the service of organized crime.

This proved to a wise precaution, because even before the Nazzadi reached Earth assaults from lost temper, not to mention sexual abuse, were keeping the fleet's actual police force very busy. Humanity itself indeed unleashed the forces of crime on the Nazzadi, and by the time of Revelation Day the Nazzadi forces were riddled with drug addicts and blackmail victims.

After Revelation Day, Zendo Nari actually managed fairly well. She was the kind of woman who would land on top of any heap, and her lieutenants were bound to her not merely by oaths (based on a traditional honor system now revealed to be wholly artificial) but by money, favors and the tie of having committed terrible crimes together. If she had told them to join the NEG, they would have. But instead she told them to maintain their loyalty to the Mi-Go, for Zendo Nari was a firm Loyalist. They obeyed her, and got to work.

As far as common masses know, the Yarany Hrana is a conventional criminal organization that has penetrated the Nazzadi community. Extortion, illegal drugs, illegal prostitution, loan sharking, Ponzi schemes and the whole shebang of organized crime are under their purview. Independent criminal groups

someone else paid it. While a few Illuminati, such as William Randolph Hearst and Richard Cheney, have been public figures most have pulled strings from the shadows. They did not control everything, often sudden events or social movements were out of their hands. All they cared for was to take advantage of these events to make themselves richer or more influential -- nation, race and even religion were never relevant. On rare occasions one of them would be caught out for a crime, but the law was never able to touch him. Evidence would be lost and witnesses would recant, and sometimes even pardons issued -- no Illuminatus has ever been punished, though their ignorant minions on rare occasion have.

The only crack in the Illuminati's secrecy occurred in the 1960s, when a few researchers figured out what was going on. They were murdered, but the Illuminati realized that others might do the same research. Their solution was elegant -- they arranged for the publication of books describing them, but accompanied the few facts in the books with such utter garbage that no one with even a modicum of intelligence would take them seriously. Dating back to ancient Sumeria, the Cold War being fake, mind control drugs in the water supply, and similar blithering was included to make it all totally absurd. Soon the only people who took the idea of the Illuminati seriously were the kind of nuts that pose no threat to anyone except themselves. To the conspiracy's amusement, the idea even entered popular culture and had a collectible card game based on it!

But after the discovery of arcanotech, their influence began to wane. They never had any luck influencing the two new economic powers, the Ashcroft Foundation or the Chrysalis Corporation, and could not control the vast social and economic changes unleashed by the D-Engine and the nanofactory. They made vast profits off the Second Cold War, though, and were making inroads into the NUN, when the Nazzadi were sighted. This changed the Illuminati's goals from self-enrichment to survival, again no one will know the bribes and blackmails they carried out to help unite humanity in time.

After the betrayal of the Firstborn ended the First Arcanotech War, the Illuminati took stock. They knew much more than the general public about the dire state of the military situation at the end of the war, and were not caught up in general euphoria of peace. If the newly revealed Mi-Go could create one almost-victorious fleet, they could certainly build another, and another, until humanity was finally crushed (even the Illuminati did not anticipate something as drastic as the Hive Ship). The secret group decided to do what it had always done in times of struggle -- back the group it thought would win. Thus when the NEG

sent out messages to the Mi-Go asking for peace, the Illuminati embedded in the code their own message, pledging their service to the aliens. All they asked in exchange was to be spared the Mi-Go ravages, and to become humanity's rulers after it was conquered.

The Mi-Go accepted, and even before the Hive Ship was launched they and the Illuminati were working together. The cabal has sabotaged the NEG's activities from behind the scenes again and again. The Illuminati do not possess occult powers or alien technology, because they don't bother with such things. They simply have more lawyers, guns and money than any other nongovernmental group on Earth, save for the Ashcroft Foundation and the Children of Chaos. Not even the Death Shadows can match them in secular power, though the Death Shadows do have much greater magical resources.

The Illuminati have prevented brilliant leaders from receiving promotions and made generals out of fools. Their lawyers have obstructed investigations into Mi-, and their economic muscle has caused no end of logistical nightmares. When necessary, they hire criminals through cutouts, who are cutouts themselves, to carry out sabotage and murder. They drastically influence public opinion through their advertising agencies and newspapers. They are a terrible threat to the world, and to any player character who gets in their way. But no one, not even the Eldritch Society or the OIS, suspects they even exist. The Director knows, for the Director knows all things, but has not seen fit to inform his mortal servants of them.

Sample Illuminatus:

Aleksey Nikitin

Defining Characteristics: Decisive, Cruel

Experience Level: Veteran

Race: Human

Gender: Male

Allegiance: Mi-Go

Attributes: Agility 4, Intelligence 9, Perception 9, Presence 6, Strength 5, Tenacity 7

- ❖ A few Illuminati believe that the Mi-Go may not win, and are planning to double-cross the Mi-Go and serve either the cults or the NEG, claiming that this was their plan all along.

New Cult: Conspiracy Terrorists

When arcane theory was developed, along with the associated technologies once deemed impossible, most people hailed it as a triumph of science. But one group claimed that free energy and antigravity was older, and had been around for a century. These "conspiracy theorists" were believers in massive plots to keep humanity enslaved by a power elite, and that everything -- the 9/11 attacks, the world wars, everything, was all planned out decades in advance. They had been claiming for decades that there were secret technologies and that psionic power was real -- and here was the proof, the Illuminati/Bilderbergers/Trilateral Commission had simply decided to make these technologies public. Indeed, conspiracy theory became very popular in the 2040s and 2050s. All that was missing was the NUN -- always a focus of conspiracy nuts -- to dissolve the world's governments and take over.

Then, of course, that happened to. To the masses, it was a necessary step to fight the aliens. To conspiracy theorists, it was proof that they had been predicting the future. They came to the conclusion the Nazzadi upper echelons and the human upper echelons were working together, to establish rulership over both species. This was of course, crazy -- but something like it actually happened, on Revelation Day.

Revelation Day was the critical moment that transformed conspiracy theory to conspiracy terrorism. Everything the conspiracy theorists feared had come to pass, the only thing to do was fight. Unlike the rigidly controlled Blood Brigade, which targets civilians, the typical conspiracy terrorist is a lone wolf, recruited through word of mouth or by reading banned books. He or she focuses on assassination of political and military elites, since attacking civilians (which the supposed Illuminati don't care about) is a pointless endeavor.

New Cult: Hunting Clubs

The Aeon War may well prove to be the end of humanity as humanity recognizes itself now. For all the NEG's distractions and propaganda, this cannot be totally hidden from the population, and many people have thrown themselves into extreme hedonism, seeking out ever greater thrills in the short time they may have left. Before an arcology falls, many will refuse evacuation and engage in decadent partying rather than save their own lives. Middle class families blow their life savings in a weekend of being waited on hand and foot -- what the rich are doing does not bear mentioning.

The NEG's law enforcement does not care about this, much. It is busy with other things, such as the sudden rise in street crime. But one particular pleasure has become dangerously prevalent -- hunting. Some of the hunters go out into the war zones to hunt down mecha or monsters, and the NEG doesn't mind this. But a few of them are going after a prey less dangerous but available in greater quantities -- other humans.

Hunting clubs will kidnap people, take them outside the arcologies, let them loose, and hunt them down like animals. This is common enough that the NEG has had to pass laws specifically addressing it, which is terrifying in and of itself. In their early formation clubs will take anyone, but most people in the ultra-urbanized world of 2087 don't have the skills to give enough of a thrill. So they begin to take more dangerous people to hunt, like police officers, soldiers, parapsychics -- and PCs.

Garber Home for the Gifted

Adolescents, and even children, with parapsychic powers are a problem ordinary schools and parents simply can't deal with. While the most obvious problems arise from Environmental powers, Somatic and Manipulation powers present their own issues. How to deal with a cheater who steals answers from other students minds, or mentally controls the teacher to ignore disciplinary issues? Even Sensory powers present terrible issues with blackmail. For that reason, every arcology has several institutions like the Garber Home for the Gifted.

- ❖ In a special underground dormitory, the Garber Home houses unusual para-psychics whose abilities go beyond what the public knows about para-psychology, people capable of implanting seeds of themselves into another person's mind to slowly take it over, psychics who can link with Migou, powerful burners, and at least one who can manifest Fourth Order powers.

New Merit: Conditional parapsychic power

This was inspired by Terrence See of the Vorkosigan saga, who is a telepath but needs drugs to activate his power. In Cthulhutech, a conditional parapsychic is one whose powers require some external condition to work. The condition must be something that is difficult to satisfy to qualify for the Merit -- the need to say "Shazam!" does not count. How much the condition decreases the Merit's cost depends on how onerous the condition is. This can be combined with the "Limited parapsychic potential" post of Looks_Also_Into_You.

Examples include:

- ❖ An oracle who can see the future -- so long as she is on a specific island.
- ❖ A drug that is used up with each power use, and which is carried around in easily-breakable vials to boot.
- ❖ A telepath whose abilities only work on men -- women are immune.
- ❖ The character must not have any Wounds -- or must have at least one Wound.

Pop Culture Blurbs

This is a repost from the old boards. It is a series of blurbs about pop culture in 2087.

Popstra music: The fusion of popular music and orchestral music, this genre has the lyrics and rhythms of pop, rock and jazz -- but the large playing groups of orchestra music. Twenty band members is typical, and thirty or even forty is not unknown. It dominates the charts in 2086.

Fashion: With the daring fashions for both men and women in the strange aeon body art has risen to a new level of prominence. Body paint is quickly becoming an essential element when dressing to impress,

at least among baseline humans. However given the temporary nature of body paint it's generally an after market add on, and matching a paint job to an outfit is vital, the payoff however is being able to wear the season's latest hits without worrying about a rival showing up in an identical get up since the right paint work can make an entirely different beast out of any dress or suit.

The New Prequels: Following George Lucas's death in 2023, his family found notes for extensive revisions and alterations to what his diary referred to as the "impulsive" scripts for the Star Wars prequels. In the period between the Arcanotech Wars these were adapted into the "New Prequels". No greenscreens or models were used. Rather the Jedi and Sith were all played by real para-psychics, the chase and racing scenes used actual antigravity vehicles, and the space battle scenes were shot in actual outer space. It was a staggering success, and the original prequels are now relegated to the dustbin of history.

The Viga Awards: In 2087, video games are considered an art form equal to literature, movies, and TV shows and the Viga Awards are the equivalent of the Emmys and Oscars. They receive equal billing on the major networks, with the same hoopla. Game designers are as important as actors and actresses.

True Definition Television (TDTV): The standard television in 2087 produces images so sharp and clear viewers literally cannot tell them from reality, only the fact the picture is on a wall indicates anything is different. It is considered the furthest 2D can go. Engineers have the ability to produce higher resolution, and do so for scientific imaging equipment, but there is no point in doing so for commercial use.

Special effects are much cheaper in 2087, due to massive advances in computer imaging technology and due to nanoforges to make costumes and sets. A "low-grade B movie", of the sort Asylum pictures puts out today, has production values equivalent to a 2014 tent-pole movie. What the tent-pole movies look like is simply incredible to view. The only "limit" on what can be done is the artistic vision of the creators -- which, as today, is often lacking.

Altrel fiction: In the 2040s, science fiction was facing an existential crisis in that most of what it had predicted -- energy weapons, space colonies, antigravity, and a world government -- had actually happened. The solution was to rebrand the science fiction genre as the alternate reality genre. Now no pretense is made that sci-fi represents any kind of "future".

Superheroes: The superhero genre has fallen on hard times. During the first Arcanotech War all comic book companies reworked their superhero stories into parables justifying the extermination of the Nazzadi at the behest of the NEG. When the Nazzadi were revealed to be pawns of the Mi-Go, the backlash doomed superhero comics for good. While graphic novels still exist, the old superheros are gone.

While the archetypal superhero comic is pretty much a dead genre, one champion of the DCU is seeing major success: Jonah Hex. Considered too minor a character to get into the war propaganda for the first Arcanotech war, and marketed as a retro-style Cowboy hero for several years following the debacle DC comics has managed to get by, albeit much reduced. The more fantastic elements have slowly been re-added to the comics as time goes on, but much care has been taken to keep Jonah Hex very much a Cowboy.

Marvel went a different direction. They've taken to buying the stories of real occult investigations from various private investigators, and making comic book versions of those events (with details altered to protect those involved). Even a few government services such as the police or the more specialized agencies will sell a story or two on occasion.

RPGs, Wargames and LARPs: Role playing games are much more mainstream in 2087. There are some major differences -- D&D has removed the Drow as being too close to the Nazzadi, for example. Being an rpg writer pays well, if one does it well. I admit there is some wish fulfillment here.

In 2043 The Adventures of Derpy Hooves concluded with the 5th season Finale. Many fans were saddened, but with her Epic quest concluded the show creators decided to focus on remaking the Original MLP:FiM for 3D projectors, and on their 6th spin off series Snips and Snails on Rails, detailing the adventures of young adult Snips and Snails as they travel Equestria and beyond with a hoof made locomotive.

The current trend in RPGs leans toward Steam Punk as both sword and sorcery and sci-fi tend to be a tad too real for the modern escapist. Beware of goggle wearing basement dwellers, they are just chomping at the bit to talk long and hard about their 4th tier Gremlin Clank Jockeys or their 6th tier Jaeger Blast Knights.

Historical and Modern Wargaming are undergoing a resurgence, aided by the use of 3d projections to eliminate the need for expensive, looseable, breakable figurines and to speed up movement and overall play. Many regions treat such games with the same seriousness as chess, and many tournaments are held in a variety of formats. Several agencies including the military scout such competitions looking for potential officer talent.

One of the cultural aspects of the false history crafted for the Nazzadi that persists to this day is the Tok'di or game pack. A deck of cards divided into 5 suites of 12 cards each (0-9 and two 'face' cards) and 5 6-sided dice (though some come with a spare die just to fill the box and keep it from rattling).

The Nazzadi 'culture' provided by the migou included games with both dice and cards, and the most popular were those that included both so the dice and cards were generally produced and sold together as part of a set. Humans pounced on the idea, in fact they had learned the rules to several games and began producing variations before the war was over.

To this day many Nazzadi enthusiasts do not like to speak of the first inter-racial Yotoki (Imagine something akin to poker but based on your die rolls you can influence the game a bit, and exchanging cards costs die rolls, adding another dimension to the cost-benefit calculations and the bluffing) tournament, seeing as the winner was not only human but the final table was completely devoid of Nazzadi, to make matters worse they had been using a Nazzadi variation of the game rather than the 'official' rules or any of the terran variations developed from mistranslations/incomplete knowledge of the rules.

The combination of cards and dice is so versatile that many games have been developed for the pack since, including games that use the dice as meeples and the cards to create a game board, an RPG, and what's known as reverse strip poker. Reverse strip poker originated as a joke amongst Nazzadi, deriding human nudity taboos. The players begin naked with a pile of silly, heavy, ill-fitting, itchy clothes, and as the game progresses the losers of each hand have to don apparel from the pile selected by the winner of the hand.

Nazzadi Pop Culture: The Nazzadi brought with them from their "homeworld" vast databases of popular culture and art, most of which is frankly pretty boring. This is because it was all artificially created by the Mi-Go to give greater verisimilitude to their deception, and the Mi-Go have only the barest idea of what

games. In addition, they found human fans because they are, in fact, quite fun! (In reality, they are extinct sports from Earth that the Mi-Go copied, based on their long observation of mankind.)

Like most things in the Strange Aeon, however, sport comes with a darker side. Humanity has thrown itself into sports for the same reason it has into pop culture and fashion -- it wants to enjoy what little time it may well have left. Overzealous fans take extreme measures to manipulate outcomes, as do players. Vast sums change hands over the games, as gambling both legal and illegal goes on, and many are impoverished. Finally, the Disciples of Death's Shadows sponsor bloody gladiatorial fights to the death.

Here are some sport-related adventure ideas:

- ❖ A rogue arcanotech researcher has developed an extract, made from the body of Byakhees he summoned and ambushed, that makes him physically capable of competing in martial arts competitions but cannot be detected by conventional testing. But it has also produced in him a taste for human flesh -- and other Byakhees are trying to find him, seeking revenge for their kin.
- ❖ The characters are assigned to track down a security breach. The actual spy is the grav-car racing husband of a top general, who gives data his husband leaves around the hab to the Mi-Go in exchange for superior engine tuning that lets him defeat his competitors.
- ❖ The 2088 Olympics are coming up -- but the Blood Brigade sees the event as a tempting target, while the Yarany Hrana are attempting to rig the events in order to make money off the gambling.

Gulches

Gulches are self-sufficient communities independent of the NEG's infrastructure, made possible by free energy and nanotech manufacturing. They take their name from "Galt's Gulch", a community in a mid-20th century fictional\philosophical work titled Atlas Shrugged. In the book the world's rich people all abandon society and take up residence in Galt's Gulch -- without millionaires to do their thinking for them, the government collapses. For obvious reasons, this philosophy enjoyed great success among rich people in the later parts of the 20th and early parts of the 21st century. To 2086 sensibilities it seems self-

he prepared to take another step back, but felt something root him to the spot.

His legs, nearly halfway to the knees, had sunk into the invisible floor, and the floor was rising. Interestingly, the figure began to take on sharper contrast as it came closer, individual features shaping themselves out of blurry gray, some beginning to show color. The figure, too, seemed to remain eye-to-eye with him, and its legs remained totally visible, even as the floor stopped rising somewhere around his waist. It was then that he saw what the figure was slowly becoming.

And, as anyone with a grasp of romantic stereotypes will tell you, it was his dead girlfriend: black skin with Caucasian features, softly glowing red eyes, cute little fangs, and a name: Kory. He opened his mouth to speak, but she silenced him with a finger against his lips. It was at this point that her image became slightly blurry at the edges...and...and the newly re-sharpened image resumed walking towards him...and simply put his head against her bosom and gave a gentle hug.

While he wasn't able to see what was happening to himself, he could certainly feel a delicious friction pick up. A lucid dream was a novelty for him, but he hadn't made whatever was enclosing his dick rotate one way, then the other, switching at random intervals.

It was an odd feeling, having your hair stroked by a dead woman, who began letting out delightful little mewls and moans, as though she were riding him instead of merely hugging him: his cock was somewhere below her snatch, but she acted as though she were getting a nice, slow lovemaking. And she guided his head down to a nipple, and, he obligingly sucked and bit at it. The whole dream seemed to fuzz and lose cohesion for a split second, before returning to focus, but even after it had done so, everything was just short of having razor-sharp clarity. The woman he was sucking at started to breathe harder. A girl he only thought occasionally thought of, being immobilized up to the waist, and much slower sex than he regularly fantasized about? He'd long since put together that this was not wholly his own dream.

Doubly so since whoever was on the other end had a lactation fetish. And it tasted too good to be real. This begged a question- his torso was mashed into her leaking tits while her mouth caught his in a hungry kiss. That train of thought was going to have to wait. The foot-long tongue had precedence. She first wrapped his own tongue with hers, completely encasing it, before alternating licking around his whole mouth and cocooning his tongue again, massaging it with waves of her own muscle. She only stopped when it became obvious he was out of breath. This further sealed the deal for him: who needed to breathe in a dream? Was he somehow sleepwalking? The immobilized legs answered "no". At least, about the "walking" part. So what was going on...?

